Exhibit 1.6 An Impoverished Mexican Immigrant Family

Source: © Alison Wright/Corbis.

Descriptive research: Research in which social phenomena are defined and described.

Descriptive Research

Defining and describing social phenomena of interest is a part of almost any research investigation, but **descriptive research** is often the primary focus of the first research about some issue. Descriptive questions asked in research on social ties have included the following: What is the level of particular types of social ties in America (McPherson et al. 2006)? What social and cultural patterns characterize disadvantaged neighborhoods (Harding 2007)? What types of social ties do Internet users have (Nie & Erbring 2000)? Measurement (the topic of Chapter 4) and sampling (Chapter 5) are central concerns in descriptive research. Survey research (Chapter 8) is often used for descriptive purposes. Some comparative research also has a descriptive purpose (Chapter 13).

Example: Comings and goings on Facebook? Lee Rainie, Director of the Pew Internet Project, and his colleagues Aaron Smith and Maeve Duggan (2013) sought to describe the frequency with which Americans stopped using Facebook and the reasons they did so. To investigate this issue, they surveyed 1,006 American adults by phone and asked them such questions as,

> Do you ever use Facebook?

and

> Have you ever voluntarily taken a break from using Facebook for a period of several weeks or more?

They found that two thirds of American adults who use the Internet also use Facebook and that most (61%) say they have voluntarily taken a break from using Facebook at some time for at least several weeks (Rainie et al. 2013). Rainie et al. also found that one fifth of Internet users said they had once used Facebook but no longer do

so, whereas almost 1 in 10 Internet users who had not used Facebook were interested in doing so. Among those who had stopped using Facebook at some point, reasons for the "break" included not having enough time, lacking interest in the site, not seeing valuable content, and disliking gossiping by their friends.

As indicated in Exhibit 1.7, Rainie et al. also found that women were more likely to report increased interest in Facebook and to expect increased use in the next year.

Exploratory Research

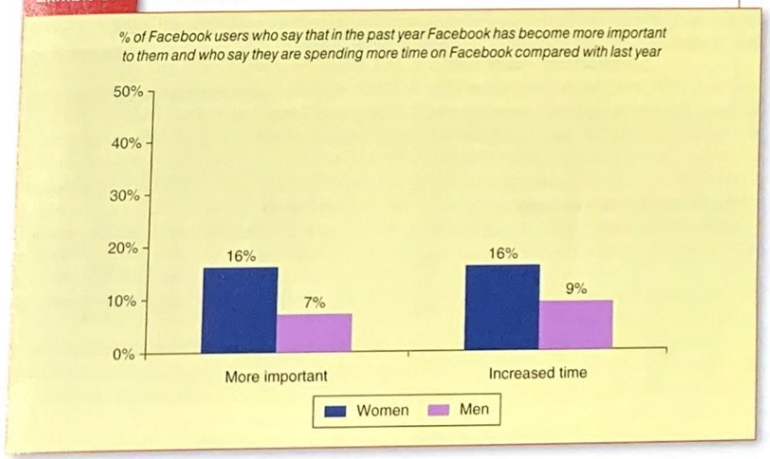
Exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them. The goal is to learn "What is going on here?" and to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations. This purpose is associated with the use of methods that capture large amounts of relatively unstructured information or that take a field of inquiry in a new direction. For example, researchers investigating social ties occurring through the Internet have had to reexamine the meaning of "community," asking whether cyberspace interactions can constitute a community that is seen as "real and essential" to participants (Fox & Roberts 1999:644). "How is identity—true or counterfeit—established in online communities?" asked Peter Kollock and Marc Smith (1999:9). How can elderly people use the Internet to manage their heart conditions better (Loader et al. 2002)? Exploratory research such as this frequently involves qualitative methods, which are the focus of Chapters 10 and 11, as well as special sections in many other chapters.

Exploratory research: Seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them.

Journal Link
Mobile Communities

Example: Can Internet resources help elderly persons manage heart conditions? The Internet provides a "space where disparate individuals can find mutual solace and exchange information within a common community of interest" (Loader et al. 2002:53). It is easy to understand why these features of the Internet "space" have made it a popular medium for individuals seeking help for health problems. Too often, however, elderly persons who grew up without computers do not benefit from this potentially important resource.

Exhibit 1.7 The Value of Facebook



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Omnibus Survey, conducted December 13 to 16, 2012, on landline and cell phones. *N* for male Facebook users = 233. *N* for female Facebook users = 292.

British social scientists Sally Lindsay, Simon Smith, Frances Bell, and Paul Bellaby (2007) were impressed with the potential of Internet-based health resources and wondered how access to those resources might help elderly persons manage heart conditions. Lindsay and her colleagues decided to explore this question by introducing a small group of older men to computers and the Internet and then letting them discuss their experiences with using the Internet for the next 3 years. Through the Internet, participants sought support from others with similar health problems, they helped others to cope, and they learned more about their condition.

Lindsay and her colleagues read through transcripts of interviews and a guided group discussion with their participants. The researchers then identified different themes and categorized text passages in terms of the themes and their interrelations. Two researchers read each transcript and compared their classifications of themes. These two researchers also discussed their interpretations of what they learned with their coauthors as well as with two of the elderly interviewees. For example, the researchers categorized one passage as showing *how the Internet could help reduce fear about participants' heart conditions:* "There's a lot of information there. It makes you feel a lot better. It takes a lot of the fear away. It's a horrible feeling once you've had a heart attack" (Lindsay et al. 2007:103).

In general, 3 years after being introduced to the Internet, "the majority were more informed and confident about managing their health and had developed strategies for meeting their specific informational needs and making better informed decisions" (Lindsay et al. 2007:107).

The Internet provided these new users with both more knowledge and greater social support in dealing with their health problems.

Research|Social Impact Link
Exploratory Research

Explanatory Research

Explanatory research: Seeks to identify causes and effects of social phenomena and to predict how one phenomenon will change or vary in response to variation in some other phenomenon.

Many consider explanation the premier goal of any science. **Explanatory research** seeks to identify the causes and effects of social phenomena and to predict how one phenomenon will change or vary in response to variation in some other phenomenon. Internet researchers adopted explanation as a goal when they began to ask such questions as "Does the Internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital?" (Wellman et al. 2001). "Do students who meet through Internet interaction like each other more than those who meet face-to-face"? (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons 2002:41). And "how [does] the Internet affect the role and use of the traditional media?" (Nie & Erbring 2002:276). I focus on ways of identifying causal effects in Chapter 6. Explanatory research often involves experiments (see Chapter 7) or surveys (see Chapter 8), both of which are most likely to use quantitative methods.

Example: What effect does Internet use have on social relations? Jeffrey Boase, John B. Horrigan, Barry Wellman, and Lee Rainie (2006), sociologists at the University of Toronto at the time (Boase and Wellman) and researchers at the Pew Internet Project (Horrigan and Rainie), sought to understand how the Internet is affecting community life in general and the maintenance of social ties in particular. For this purpose, they analyzed data from two phone surveys, conducted in 2004 and 2005, of 4,401 Americans. The surveys included questions about Internet use, social ties, help seeking, and decision making.

Boase and his coauthors (2006) found that the Internet and e-mail help people maintain dispersed social networks and do not conflict with the maintenance of social ties in the local community involving personal or phone contact. The researchers actually found that people who have more in-person and phone connections also tend to use the Internet more. The social value of the Internet is also increased because it is used to seek help and make decisions at important times.

Other social researchers have also found that the Internet can be "a catalyst for creating and maintaining friendships and family relationships" (UCLA Center for Communication Policy 2001:8; see also Stern & Dillman 2006), despite concerns by some that using the Internet may interfere with other types of social ties (Nie & Erbring 2000).

Evaluation research: Research that describes or identifies the impact of social policies and programs.

Evaluation Research

Evaluation research seeks to determine the effects of programs, policies, or other efforts to affect social patterns, whether by government agencies, private nonprofits, or for-profit businesses. This is a type of explanatory research because it deals with cause and effect, but it differs from other forms of explanatory research because evaluation research focuses on one type of cause: programs, policies, and other conscious efforts to create change (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao 2004:337). This focus raises some issues that are not relevant in other types of explanatory research. Concern regarding the potential impact of alternative policies regarding the Internet provided an impetus for new evaluation research. Chapter 12 introduces evaluation research.

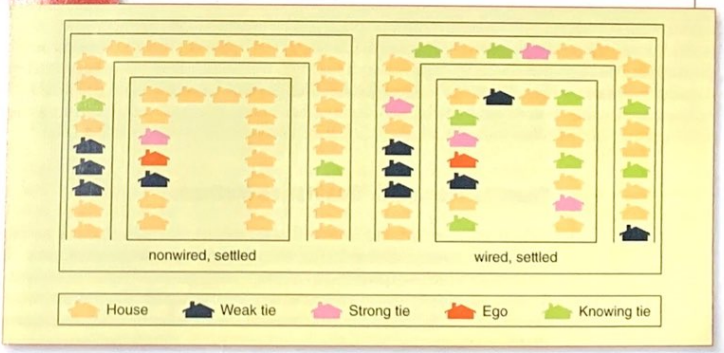
Example: Does high-speed Internet access change community life? Netville's developers connected all homes in this new suburban Toronto community with a high-speed cable and appropriate devices for Internet access. Sociologists Barry Wellman and Keith Hampton (1999) used this arrangement to evaluate the impact of Internet access on social relations. They surveyed Netville residents who were connected to the Internet and compared them with residents who had not activated their computer connections. Hampton actually lived in Netville for 2 years, participating in community events and taking notes on social interaction.

It proved to be difficult to begin research in a rapidly developing community (Hampton & Wellman 1999), but a combination of household surveys and participant observation, supplemented by analysis of postings to the community e-mail list and special group discussions (focus groups), resulted in a comprehensive investigation of the role of the computer network in community social life (Hampton & Wellman 2000).

Hampton and Wellman found that Internet access increased social relations of residents ("Ego" in Exhibit 1.8) with other households, resulting in a larger and less geographically concentrated circle of friends. E-mail was used to set up face-to-face social events rather than as a substitute for them. Information about home repair and other personal and community topics and residents' service needs were exchanged over the Internet. Sensitive personal topics, however, were discussed offline. Although wired residents knew more people within Netville by name and talked to more people on a regular basis than did the nonwired residents, they were not more likely to actually visit other residents (Hampton 2003:422). Hampton and Wellman also found that being wired into the computer network enabled residents to maintain more effectively their relations with friends and relatives elsewhere. Overall, community ties were enriched and extra-community social ties were strengthened (Hampton & Wellman 2001).

IE Interactive Exercises Link
Types of Research

Exhibit 1.8 The Development of Social Ties in a New Wired and Nonwired Neighborhood



Source: Hampton and Wellman 2000. Reprinted with permission.

CAREERS AND RESEARCH

Jessica LeBlanc, Research Assistant

Jessica LeBlanc majored in sociology at the University of New Hampshire, but she didn't really know what kind of career it would lead to. Then she took an undergraduate statistics course and found she really enjoyed it. She took additional methods courses—survey research and an individual research project course—and really liked those also.

By the time she graduated, LeBlanc knew she wanted a job in social research. She looked online for research positions in marketing, health care, and other areas. She noticed an opening at the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and thought their work sounded fascinating. The job description said "MA preferred," but within a week she had an interview and then was hired. LeBlanc liked CSR because it was academic, had a wide range of projects, and had many that were focused on her primary interests in health.

As a Research Assistant II, LeBlanc designed survey questions, transcribed focus group audiotapes, programmed web surveys, and managed incoming data. She also conducted interviews, programmed computer-assisted telephone surveys, and helped conduct focus groups.

The knowledge that LeBlanc gained in her methods courses about research designs, statistics, question construction, and survey procedures prepared her well for her position at CSR. She has found that it's important to understand validity and reliability and the basics of statistical software. Her advice to aspiring researchers: Pay attention in your first methods class!

LeBlanc has also benefited from on-the-job training. In her first year, she learned the ins and outs of the center and social research, she completed an online course in human subjects protections, and she learned how to conduct cognitive interviews and moderate focus groups. She's also learned how to use Microsoft Access and Excel and how to program surveys delivered through computers. Overall, LeBlanc enjoys the nitty-gritty and hands-on, day-to-day management tasks.

Alternative Research Orientations

Encyclopedia Link
Qualitative Research

In addition to deciding on the type of research they will conduct, social researchers also must choose among several alternative orientations to research. Some researchers always adopt the same orientation in their research, but others vary their orientation based on the research particulars. It's also possible to combine these alternative orientations in different ways. I introduce alternative orientations in this chapter that represent answers to three important questions that must be considered when you begin a research project: (1) Will the research use primarily quantitative or qualitative methods, or some mixture? (2) Will your guiding philosophy in the research be more "positivist," with a focus on social realities, or more "constructivist," with a focus on the meanings that people create? (3) Is the goal to accumulate new knowledge (basic science) or to make a practical contribution (applied research), or to do both?

Quantitative and/or Qualitative Methods

Quantitative methods: Methods such as surveys and experiments that record variation in social life in terms of categories that vary in amount. Data that are treated as quantitative are either numbers or attributes that can be ordered by magnitude.

Did you notice the difference between the types of data used in the studies about the Internet? The primary data used in the descriptive survey about Facebook use were counts of the number of people who had particular numbers of social ties and particular kinds of social ties, as well as their age, education, and other characteristics (Rainie et al. 2013). These data were numerical, so we say that this study used **quantitative methods.** The Census Bureau survey (Strickling 2010), the Lewis research

(Lewis et al. 2008), and the Ling and Stald (2010) research also used quantitative methods—they reported their findings as percentages and other statistics that summarized the relationship between Internet usage and various aspects of social relations. In contrast, Hampton and Gupta (2008) observed Wi-Fi users in public spaces. Because the researchers recorded their actual observations and did not attempt to quantify what they were studying, we say that Hampton and Gupta (2008) used **qualitative methods.**

Qualitative methods: Methods such as participant observation, intensive interviewing, and focus groups that are designed to capture social life as participants experience it rather than in categories predetermined by the researcher. These methods rely on written or spoken words or observations that do not often have a direct numerical interpretation and typically involve exploratory research questions, inductive reasoning, an orientation to social context and human subjectivity, and the meanings attached by participants to events and to their lives.

The distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods involves more than just the type of data collected. Quantitative methods are most often used when the motives for research are explanation, description, or evaluation. Exploration is more often the motive for using qualitative methods, although researchers also use these methods for descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative purposes. I highlight several other differences between quantitative and qualitative methods in the next two chapters. Chapters 10 and 11 present qualitative methods in much more detail. Chapter 3 introduces the alternative research philosophies that often lie behind the preference for quantitative or qualitative methods.

Important as it is, I don't want to place too much emphasis on the distinction between quantitative and qualitative orientations or methods. Social scientists often combine these methods to enrich their research. For example, Hampton and Wellman (2000) used surveys to generate counts of community network usage and other behaviors in Netville, but to help interpret these behaviors, they also observed social interaction and recorded spoken comments. In this way, qualitative data about social settings can be used to understand patterns in quantitative data better (Campbell & Russo 1999:141).

The use of multiple methods to study one research question is called **triangulation**. The term suggests that a researcher can get a clearer picture of the social reality being studied by viewing it from several different perspectives. Each will have some liabilities in a specific research application, and all can benefit from a combination of one or more other methods (Brewer & Hunter 1989; Sechrest & Sidani 1995).

Triangulation: The use of multiple methods to study one research question; also used to mean the use of two or more different measures of the same variable.

The distinction between quantitative and qualitative data is not always sharp. Qualitative data can be converted to quantitative data when we count the frequency of particular words or phrases in a text or measure the time elapsed between different observed behaviors. Surveys that collect primarily quantitative data may also include questions asking for written responses, and these responses may be used in a qualitative, textual analysis. Qualitative researchers may test explicit explanations of social phenomena using textual or observational data. We consider a *mixed-method* strategy in more detail in Chapter 15 and we examine particular combinations of methods in most other chapters.

Positivist or Constructivist Philosophies

Your general assumptions about how the social world can best be investigated—your social research philosophy—will partly shape your investigations of the social world. Researchers with a *positivist philosophy* believe that an objective reality exists apart from the perceptions of those who observe it, and that the goal of science is to understand this reality better. This is the philosophy traditionally associated with natural science, with the expectation that there are universal laws of human behavior, and with the belief that scientists must be objective and unbiased to see reality clearly (Weber 1949:72). **Positivism** asserts that a well-designed test of a specific prediction—for example, the prediction that social ties decrease among those who use the Internet more—can move us closer to understanding actual social processes. Quantitative researchers are often guided by a positivist philosophy.

Positivism: The belief, shared by most scientists, that there is a reality that exists quite apart from our own perception of it, that it can be understood through observation, and that it follows general laws.

Postpositivism: A philosophical view that modifies the positivist premise of an external, objective reality by recognizing its complexity, the limitations of human observers, and therefore the impossibility of developing more than a partial understanding of reality.

Intersubjective agreement: Agreement between scientists about the nature of reality; often upheld as a more reasonable goal for science than certainty about an objective reality.

Postpositivism is a philosophy that is closely related to positivism because it also assumes an external, objective reality, but postpositivists acknowledge the complexity of this reality and the limitations and biases of the scientists who study it (Guba & Lincoln 1994:109–111). For example, postpositivists may worry that researchers, who are heavy computer users themselves, will be biased in favor of finding positive social effects of computer use. As a result of concerns such as this, postpositivists do not think we can ever be sure that scientific methods allow us to perceive objective reality. Instead, they believe that the goal of science is to achieve **intersubjective agreement** among scientists about the nature of reality (Wallace 1983:461). We can be more confident in the community of social researchers than in any individual social scientist (Campbell & Russo 1999:144).

The positivist and postpositivist philosophies consider value considerations to be beyond the scope of science: "An empirical science cannot tell anyone what he should do—but rather what he can do—and under certain circumstances—what he wishes to do" (Weber 1949:54). The idea is that developing valid knowledge about how society *is* organized, or how we live our lives, does not tell us how society *should* be organized or how we *should* live our lives. The determination of empirical facts should be a separate process from the evaluation of these facts as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Weber 1949:11). The idea is not to ignore value considerations, but to hold them in abeyance during the research project, until results are published.

Constructivism: Methodology based on questioning belief in an external reality; emphasizes the importance of exploring the way in which different stakeholders in a social setting construct their beliefs.

Qualitative research is often guided by the philosophy of **constructivism**. Constructivist social scientists believe that social reality is socially constructed and that the goal of social scientists is to understand what meanings people give to reality, not to determine how reality works apart from these constructions. This philosophy rejects the positivist belief that there is a concrete, objective reality that scientific methods help us understand (Lynch & Bogen 1997); instead, constructivists believe that people construct an image of reality based on their own preferences and prejudices and their interactions with others and that this is as true of scientists as it is of everyone else in the social world. This means that we can never be sure that we have understood reality properly, that "objects and events are understood by different people differently, and those perceptions are the reality—or realities—that social science should focus on" (Rubin & Rubin 1995:35).

Interpretivism: The belief that the subjective meanings people give to their experiences are a key focus for social science research without believing that reality itself is socially constructed.

Hermeneutic circle: Represents the dialectical process in which the researcher obtains information from multiple stakeholders in a setting, refines his or her understanding of the setting, and then tests that understanding with successive respondents.

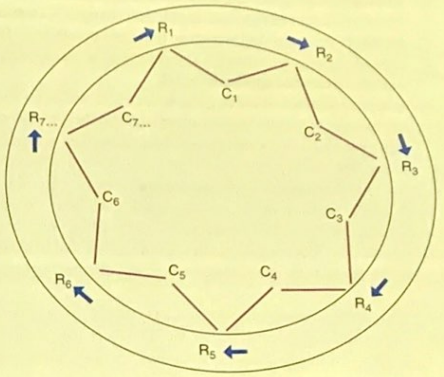
Feminist research: Research with a focus on women's lives that often includes an orientation to personal experience, subjective orientations, the researcher's standpoint, and emotions.

Constructivism emphasizes that different stakeholders in a social setting construct different beliefs (Guba & Lincoln 1989:44–45). Constructivists give particular attention to the different goals of researchers and other participants in a research setting and may seek to develop a consensus among participants about how to understand the focus of inquiry (Sulkunen 2008:73): "Truth is a matter of the best-informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus at a given time" (Schwandt 1994:128). **Interpretivism** is a related research philosophy that emphasizes the importance of understanding subjective meanings people give to reality without believing that reality itself is socially constructed.

Constructivist inquiry may use an interactive research process, in which a researcher begins an evaluation in some social setting by identifying the different interest groups in that setting. In a circular process known as a **hermeneutic circle** (Exhibit 1.9), the researcher interviews each respondent (R1, R2, etc.) to learn how they "construct" their thoughts and feelings about the topic of concern (C1, C2, etc.), and then gradually tries to develop a shared perspective on the problem being evaluated (Guba & Lincoln 1989:42, 180–181).

Feminist research is a term used to refer to research done by feminists (Reinharz 1992:6–7) and to a perspective on research that can involve many

Exhibit 1.9 The Hermeneutic Circle



Source: Guba and Lincoln 1989.

different methods (Reinharz 1992:240). The feminist perspective on research includes the interpretivist and constructivist elements of concern with personal experience and subjective feelings and with the researcher's position and standpoint (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2007:4–5). Feminist researchers Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Lina Leavy (2007:139) emphasize the importance of viewing the social world as complex and multilayered, of sensitivity to the impact of social differences, of being an "insider" or an "outsider," and of being concerned with the researcher's position. African American feminist researcher Patricia Hill Collins (1991) suggests that researchers who are sensitive to their "outside" role within a social situation may have unique advantages:

> Outsiders within occupy a special place—they become different people and their difference sensitizes them to patterns that may be more difficult for established sociological insiders to see. (p. 53)

Basic Science or Applied Research

You know that social scientists seek to describe and explain how society works. McPherson et al. (2006) sought to answer questions such as, "How do social ties vary between people or societies?" and "Why do some people, groups, or societies have more social ties than others?" Other researchers have investigated the meaning people attach to social ties and the consequences of having fewer social ties. The effort to figure out what the world is like and why it works as it does—academic motivations—is the goal of **basic science** (Hammersley 2008:50).

Basic science: Research conducted using the scientific method that has the goals of figuring out what the world is like and why it works as it does.

guide professional practice in diverse settings, while some of the specific standards focus specifically on protection of human subjects in research.

According to the general principles, sociologists should be committed in their work to high levels of competence, to practicing with integrity, and to maintaining responsibility for their actions. They must also respect the rights, dignity, and diversity of others, including research participants, as well as be sensitive responsible to their communities and use research to contribute to the public good. The following sections discuss the most important implications of these principles for the conduct of research, including the protection of human subjects.

Achieving Valid Results

Commitment to achieving valid results is the necessary starting point for ethical research practice. Simply put, we have no business asking people to answer questions, submit to observations, or participate in experiments or procedures if we are simply seeking to verify our preexisting prejudices or convince others to take actions on behalf of our personal interests. The pursuit of objective knowledge about human behavior—the goal of validity—motivates and justifies our investigations and gives us some claim to the right to influence others to participate in our research. Knowledge is the foundation of human progress as well as the basis for our expectation that we, as social scientists, can help people achieve a brighter future. If we approach our research projects objectively, setting aside our personal predilections in the service of learning a bit more about human behavior, we can honestly represent our actions as potentially contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

Milgram made a strong case in his 1963 article and 1974 book on the obedience experiments that he was committed to achieving valid results—to learning how and why obedience influences behavior. He tied his motivations directly to the horror of the Holocaust, to which the world's attention had been drawn once again by the capture and trial of Adolf Hitler's mastermind of that genocide, Adolf Eichmann (Perry 2013:210). In Milgram's (1963) own words,

> It has been reliably established that from 1933–45 millions of innocent persons were systematically slaughtered on command. . . . Obedience is the psychological mechanism that links individual action to political purpose. It is the dispositional cement that binds men to systems of authority . . . for many persons obedience may be a deeply ingrained behavior tendency. . . . Obedience may [also] be ennobling and educative and refer to acts of charity and kindness, as well as to destruction. (p. 371)

Encyclopedia Link
Ethical Codes

Milgram (1963) then explains how he devised experiments to study the process of obedience in a way that would seem realistic to the subjects and still allow "important variables to be manipulated at several points in the experiment" (p. 372). According to Milgram, every step in the experiment was carefully designed to ensure that subjects received identical stimuli and that their responses were measured carefully. The experiment's design also reflected what had become in the preceding 30 years a tradition in social psychology of laboratory experiments that used deception to create different believable conditions for participants (Perry 2013:31–35).

Milgram (1963:377) made every effort to convince readers that "the particular conditions" of his experiment created the conditions for achieving valid results. These particular conditions included the setting for the experiment at Yale University, its purported "worthy purpose" to advance knowledge about learning and memory, and the voluntary participation of the subject as well as of the learner—as far as the subject knew. Milgram then tested the importance of some of these "particular conditions" (e.g., the location at Yale) in replications of the basic experiment (Milgram 1965).

However, not all social scientists agreed that Milgram's approach could achieve valid results. Milgram's first article on the research, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," was published in 1963 in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. In the next year, the *American Psychologist* published a critique of the experiment's methods and ethics by the psychologist Diana Baumrind (1964). Her critique begins with a rejection of the external validity—the generalizability—of the experiment, because

> The laboratory is unfamiliar as a setting and the rules of behavior ambiguous. . . . Therefore, the laboratory is not the place to study degree of obedience or suggestibility, as a function of a particular experimental condition. [And so,] the parallel between authority-subordinate relationships in Hitler's Germany and in Milgram's laboratory is unclear. (pp. 421–423)

Milgram (1964) quickly published a rejoinder in which he disagreed with (among other things) the notion that it is inappropriate to study obedience in a laboratory setting: "A subject's obedience is no less problematical because it occurs within a social institution called the psychological experiment" (p. 850).

Audio Link
Milgram's Experiment

Milgram (1974:169–178) also argued in his later book that his experiment had been replicated in other places and settings with the same results, that there was considerable evidence that the subjects had believed that they actually were administering shocks, and that the "essence" of his experimental manipulation—the request that subjects comply with a legitimate authority—was also found in the dilemma faced by people in Nazi Germany, soldiers at the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, and even the cultists who drank poison in Jonestown, Guyana, at the command of their leader, Jim Jones (Miller 1986:182–183).

Baumrind (1985) was still not convinced. In a follow-up article in *American Psychologist*, she argued that "far from illuminating real life, as he claimed, Milgram in fact appeared to have constructed a set of conditions so internally inconsistent that they could not occur in real life" (p. 171). Although Milgram died in 1984, the controversy did not. A recent review of the transcripts and interviews with many participants raises additional concerns about the experiment's validity (Perry 2013). Milgram understated the "experimenter's" efforts to get the subjects to comply, he overstated the subjects' level of obedience, he never publicized one condition in which most subjects refused to give strong shocks when the "learner" was a friend, and he didn't acknowledge that even those classified as "obedient" were looking for a way to get out of the experiment. His claim that the results were replicated in similar experiments around the world was only partially true, and it seems clear from the transcripts and interviews that the aura created by the location at Yale University and the emphasis on a contribution to "science" influenced many participants.

Do you agree with Milgram's assumption that obedience could fruitfully be studied in the laboratory? Do you find merit in Baumrind's criticism? Are you troubled by the new evidence that Milgram may have presented his evidence selectively, to make his conclusions as convincing as possible? Will your evaluation of the ethics of Milgram's experiments be influenced by your answers to these questions? Should our ethical judgments differ depending on whether we decide that a study provides valid information about important social psychological processes? Should it matter that a 2005 replication of Milgram's experiment (with less severe "shocks") for ABC TV supported Milgram's conclusions (Perry 2013:275–279)?

IE
Interactive Exercises Link
Ethical Issues

I can't answer these questions for you, but before you dismiss them as inappropriate when we are dealing with ethical standards for the treatment of human subjects, bear in mind that both Milgram and his strongest critic at the time, Baumrind, buttressed their ethical arguments with assertions about the validity (or invalidity) of the experimental results. It is hard to justify *any* risk for human subjects, or even *any* expenditure of time and resources, if our findings tell us nothing about human behavior.

Honesty and Openness

The scientific concern with validity requires, in turn, that scientists be open in disclosing their methods and honest in presenting their findings. In contrast, research distorted by political or personal pressures to find particular outcomes or to achieve the most marketable results is unlikely to be carried out in an honest and open fashion. To assess the validity of a researcher's conclusions and the ethics of their procedures, you need to know exactly how the research was conducted. This means that articles or other reports must include a detailed methodology section, perhaps supplemented by appendixes containing the research instruments, or websites or an address where more information can be obtained.

Journal Link
Intensive Rehabilitation Supervision Program

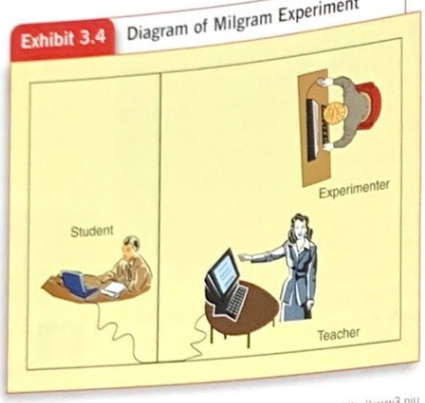
Milgram presented his research in a way that would signal his adherence to the goal of honesty and openness. His initial 1963 article included a detailed description of study procedures, including the text of

Research/Social Impact Link
Research Ethics

the general introduction to participants, the procedures involved in the learning task—the "shock generator," the administration of the "sample shock," the shock instructions and the preliminary practice run, the standardized feedback from the "victim" and from the experimenter—and the measures used. Many more details, including pictures, were provided in Milgram's (1974) subsequent book (Exhibit 3.4).

The act of publication itself is a vital element in maintaining openness and honesty. Others can review and question study procedures and so generate an open dialogue with the researcher. Although Milgram disagreed sharply with Baumrind's criticisms of his experiments, their mutual commitment to public discourse on journals widely available to social scientists resulted in a more comprehensive presentation of study procedures and a more thoughtful discourse about research ethics. Almost 50 years later, this commentary continues to inform debates about research ethics (Cave & Holm 2003).

Exhibit 3.4 Diagram of Milgram Experiment



Source: Northern Illinois University Department of Psychology, http://www3.niu.edu/acad/psych/Millis/History/2004/milgram2.gif

The latest significant publication in this open dialogue about Milgram's work actually challenges his own commitment to the standard of openness and honesty. Gina Perry's (2013) *Behind the Shock Machine: The Untold Story of the Notorious Milgram Psychology Experiments* reveals many misleading statements about participants' postexperiment debriefing, about adherence to the treatment protocol, about the extent of participants' apparent distress, and about the extent of support for his favored outcome.

Openness about research procedures and results thus goes hand in hand with honesty in research design and in research reporting. Despite this need for openness, some researchers may hesitate to disclose their procedures or results to prevent others from building on their ideas and taking some of the credit or, as may have occurred with Milgram, to make their procedures seem more acceptable or their findings more impressive. You might have heard of the long legal battle between a U.S. researcher, Robert Gallo, and a French researcher, Luc Montagnier, about how credit for discovering the AIDS virus should be allocated. Although a public dispute such as this one is unusual—even more unusual was its resolution through an agreement announced by then U.S. President Ronald Reagan and then French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac (Altman 1987)—concerns with priority of discovery are common. Scientists are like other people in their desire to be first. Enforcing standards of honesty and encouraging openness about research are the best solutions to these problems (as exemplified by the chronology of discovery that Gallo and Montagnier jointly developed as part of the agreement).

Conflict of interest: When a researcher has a significant financial stake in the design or outcome of his or her own research.

Conflicts of interest may occur when a researcher has a significant financial stake in the design or outcome of the research. Receiving speaking fees, consulting fees, patents or royalties, and other financial benefits as a result of the way in which a research project is designed or the results that it obtains creates a pressure to distort decisions and findings in one's (financial) favor. Both federal research funding agencies and journal editors require disclosure of possible conflicts of interest so that others can scrutinize the extent to which these conflicts may have lessened researchers' honesty and openness (Fisher & Anushko 2008:96–97). Unfortunately, experimental research suggests that disclosure does not reduce trust in advice from people who have disclosed a conflict of interest (Humphries 2011:K3). In fact, researchers can be unduly motivated by concerns about their publication records and career prospects even without explicit financial inducements.

Protecting Research Participants

Several standards concerning the treatment of human subjects are emphasized in federal regulations and the ethical guidelines adopted by many professional social science organizations:

- Research should cause no harm to subjects.
- Participation in research should be voluntary, and therefore subjects must give their informed consent to participate in the research and researchers must disclose their identity.
- Researchers should avoid deception, except in limited circumstances.
- Anonymity or confidentiality must be maintained for individual research participants unless it is voluntarily and explicitly waived.
- Consider the uses of a research project so that its benefits outweigh any foreseeable risks.

Journal Link
Written Consent

Each of these standards became a focus of debate about Milgram's experiments, so we will return frequently to that debate to keep our discussion realistic. We will also refer frequently to the ASA code to keep our treatment current. You will soon realize that there is no simple answer to the question: What is (or isn't) ethical research practice? The issues are just too complicated and the relevant principles too subject to different interpretations. But, I do promise that by the time you finish this chapter, you will be aware of the major issues in research ethics and be able to make informed, defensible decisions about the ethical conduct of social science research.

Avoid Harming Research Participants

Although this standard may seem straightforward, it can be difficult to interpret in specific cases and harder yet to define in a way agreeable to all social scientists. Does it mean that subjects should not be harmed psychologically as well as physically at all? That they should feel no anxiety or distress whatsoever during the study or only after their involvement ends? Should the possibility of any harm, no matter how remote, deter research?

Before we address these questions with respect to Milgram's experiments, a verbatim transcript of one session will give you an idea of what participants experienced (Milgram 1965:67):

150 volts delivered.	You want me to keep going?
165 volts delivered.	That guy is hollering in there. There's a lot of them here. He's liable to have a heart condition. You want me to go on?
180 volts delivered.	He can't stand it! I'm not going to kill that man in there! You hear him hollering? He's hollering. He can't stand it. . . . I mean who is going to take responsibility if anything happens to that gentleman? *[The experimenter accepts responsibility.]* All right.
195 volts delivered.	You see he's hollering. Hear that. Gee, I don't know. *[The experimenter says: "The experiment requires that you go on."]* I know it does, sir, but I mean—hugh—he don't know what he's in for. He's up to 195 volts.
210 volts delivered.	
225 volts delivered.	
240 volts delivered.	

This experimental manipulation generated "extraordinary tension" (Milgram 1963:377):

> Subjects were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan and dig their fingernails into their flesh. . . . Full-blown, uncontrollable seizures were observed for 3 subjects. One . . . seizure so violently convulsive that it was necessary to call a halt to the experiment [for that individual]. (p. 375)

An observer (behind a one-way mirror) reported, "I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse" (Milgram 1963:377).

From critic Baumrind's (1964:422) perspective, this emotional disturbance in subjects was "potentially harmful because it could easily effect an alteration in the subject's self-image or ability to trust adult authorities in the future." Milgram (1964) quickly countered,

> Momentary excitement is not the same as harm. As the experiment progressed there was no indication of injurious effects in the subjects; and as the subjects themselves strongly endorsed the experiment, the judgment I made was to continue the experiment. (p. 849)

When Milgram (1964:849) surveyed participants in a follow-up, 83.7% endorsed the statement that they were "very glad" or "glad" "to have been in the experiment," 15.1% were "neither sorry nor glad," and just 1.3% were "sorry" or "very sorry" to have participated (p. 849). Interviews by a psychiatrist a year later found no evidence "of any traumatic reactions" (p. 849)—although he did not disclose that of 780 initial participants, only 140 were invited for an interview and only 32 of those accepted the invitation (Perry 2013:217). After these later revelations, Milgram's (1977:21) subsequent argument that "the central moral justification for allowing my experiment is that it was judged acceptable by those who took part in it" rings hollow.

Milgram (1963) also reported that he attempted to minimize harm to subjects with postexperimental procedures "to assure that the subject would leave the laboratory in a state of well being" (p. 374). He said that a friendly reconciliation was arranged between the subject and the victim, and an effort was made to reduce any tensions that arose as a result of the experiment, but it turns out that his "dehoaxing" was normally very brief and did not disclose the deception to most participants. Most participants did not receive a letter informing them of the nature of the experiment until almost a year had passed (Milgram 1964:849; Perry 2013:72, 84).

Baumrind (1964:422) was unconvinced even without knowing of these later revelations: "It would be interesting to know what sort of procedures could dissipate the type of emotional disturbance just described [citing Milgram 1964]."

In a later article, Baumrind (1985:168) dismissed the value of the self-reported "lack of harm" of subjects who had been willing to participate in the experiment—although noting that still 16% did *not* endorse the statement that they were "glad" they had participated in the experiment. Baumrind (1985:169) also argued that research indicates most introductory psychology students (and some students in other social sciences) who have participated in a deception experiment report a decreased trust in authorities as a result—a tangible harm in itself.

Many social scientists, ethicists, and others concluded that Milgram's procedures had not harmed the subjects and so were justified for the knowledge they produced, but others sided with Baumrind's criticisms (Miller 1986:88–138; Perry 2013:269). Perry's (2013:77–78) recent investigation found even more evidence of psychological harm, including feelings of shame that had persisted since the experiment. The experimental records also reveal that debriefing never occurred for some participants and was very limited for almost all (Perry 2013:76–84). Most were not told after the experiment that the shocks were fake; the usual "dehoaxing" consisted of the "learner" reassuring the "teacher" that the shocks he had received were not harmful.

What is your opinion of the possibility for harm at this point? Does Milgram's debriefing process relieve your concerns? Are you as persuaded by the subjects' own endorsement of the experiment as was Milgram?

What about possible harm to the subjects of the famous prison simulation study at Stanford University (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo 1973)? The study was designed to investigate the impact of social position on behavior—specifically, the impact of being either a guard or a prisoner in a prison, a "total institution." The researchers selected apparently stable and mature young male volunteers and asked them to sign a

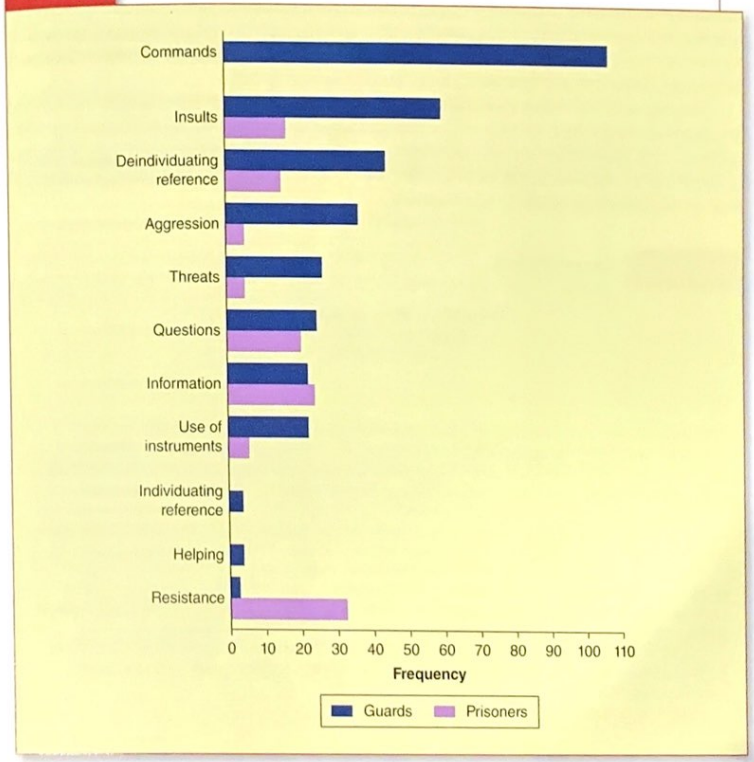
Video Link
Zimbardo's Prison Experiment

contract to work for 2 weeks as a guard or a prisoner in a simulated prison. Within the first 2 days after the prisoners were incarcerated by the "guards" in a makeshift basement prison, the prisoners began to be passive and disorganized, while the guards became "sadistic"—verbally and physically aggressive (Exhibit 3.5). Five "prisoners" were soon released for depression, uncontrollable crying, fits of rage, and, in one case, a psychosomatic rash. Instead of letting things continue for 2 weeks as planned, Philip Zimbardo and his colleagues terminated the experiment after 6 days to avoid harming the subjects.

Through discussions in special postexperiment encounter sessions, feelings of stress among the participants who played the role of prisoner seemed to be relieved; follow-up during the next year indicated no lasting negative effects on the participants and some benefits in the form of greater insight.

Would you ban such experiments because of the potential for harm to subjects? Does the fact that Zimbardo's and Milgram's experiments seemed to yield significant insights into the effect of a social situation on human behavior—insights that could be used to improve prisons or perhaps lessen the likelihood of another holocaust—make any difference (Reynolds 1979:133–139)? Do you believe that this benefit outweighs the foreseeable risks?

Exhibit 3.5 Chart of Guard and Prisoner Behavior



Source: Adapted from *The Lucifer Effect* by Philip G. Zimbardo. Copyright 2007 by Philip G. Zimbardo, Inc. Used by permission of Random House, Inc., and Random House Group Ltd.

Zimbardo's prison simulation study: Famous prison simulation study at Stanford University by psychologist Philip Zimbardo designed to investigate the impact of social position on behavior—specifically, the impact of being either a guard or a prisoner in a "total institution"; widely cited as demonstrating the likelihood of emergence of sadistic behavior in guards.

Well-intentioned researchers may also fail to foresee all the potential problems. Milgram (1974:27–31) reported that he and his colleagues were surprised by the subjects' willingness to carry out such severe shocks. In **Zimbardo's prison simulation study**, all the participants signed consent forms, but how could they have been fully informed in advance? The researchers themselves did not realize that the study participants would experience so much stress so quickly, that some prisoners would have to be released for severe negative reactions within the first few days, or that even those who were not severely stressed would soon be begging to be released from the mock prison. If this risk was not foreseeable, was it acceptable for the researchers to presume in advance that the benefits would outweigh the risks? And are you concerned, like Arthur Miller (1986), that real harm "could result from *not doing* research on destructive obedience" (p. 138) and other troubling human behaviors?

Obtain Informed Consent

The requirement of informed consent is also more difficult to define than it first appears. To be informed, consent must be given by the persons who are competent to consent, have consented voluntarily, are fully informed about the research and know who is conducting the research, and have comprehended what they have been told (Reynolds 1979). Yet you probably realize, as Baumrind (1985) did, that because of the inability to communicate perfectly, "full disclosure of everything that could possibly affect a given subject's decision to participate is not possible, and therefore cannot be ethically required" (p. 165).

Research/Social Impact Link
Informed Consent

Obtaining informed consent creates additional challenges for researchers. The researcher's actions and body language should help convey his or her verbal assurance that consent is voluntary. The language of the consent form must be clear and understandable to the research participants and yet sufficiently long and detailed to explain what will actually happen in the research. Consent Forms A (Exhibit 3.6) and B (Exhibit 3.7) illustrate two different approaches to these trade-offs.

Exhibit 3.6 Consent Form A

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Sociology
(617) 287-6250

Dear _____:

The health of students and their use of alcohol and drugs are important concerns for every college and university. The enclosed survey is about these issues at UMass/Boston. It is sponsored by University Health Services and the PRIDE Program (Prevention, Resources, Information, and Drug Education). The questionnaire was developed by graduate students in Applied Sociology, Nursing, and Gerontology.

You were selected for the survey with a scientific, random procedure. Now it is important that you return the questionnaire so that we can obtain an unbiased description of the undergraduate student body. Health Services can then use the results to guide campus education and prevention programs.

The survey requires only about 20 minutes to complete. Participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. No one will be able to link your survey responses to you. In any case, your standing at the University will not be affected whether or not you choose to participate. Just be sure to return the enclosed postcard after you mail the questionnaire so that we know we do not have to contact you again.

Please return the survey by November 15th. If you have any questions or comments, call the PRIDE program at 287-5680 or Professor Schutt at 287-6250. Also call the PRIDE program if you would like a summary of our final report.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Russell K. Schutt, PhD
Professor and Chair

Exhibit 3.7 Consent Form B

Research Consent Form for Social and Behavioral Research
Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center
BIDMC/BWH/CH/DFCI/MGH/Partners Network Affiliates OPRS 11-05

Protocol Title: ASSESSING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EDUCATING COMMUNITIES ABOUT CANCER CLINICAL TRIALS

DF/HCC Principal Research Investigator / Institution: Dr. Russell Schutt, PhD / Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Univ. of Massachusetts, Boston

DF/HCC Site-Responsible Research Investigator(s) / Institution(s): Lidia Schapira, MD / Massachusetts General Hospital

Interview Consent Form

A. INTRODUCTION

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. Research is a way of gaining new knowledge. A person who participates in a research study is called a "subject." This research study is evaluating whether community health workers might be willing and able to educate communities about the pros and cons of participating in research studies.

It is expected that about 10 people will take part in this research study.

An institution that is supporting a research study either by giving money or supplying something that is important for the research is called the "sponsor." The sponsor of this protocol is National Cancer Institute and is providing money for the research study.

This research consent form explains why this research study is being done, what is involved in participating in the research study, the possible risks and benefits of the research study, alternatives to participation, and your rights as a research subject. The decision to participate is yours. If you decide to participate, please sign and date at the end of the form. We will give you a copy so that you can refer to it while you are involved in this research study.

If you decide to participate in this research study, certain questions will be asked of you to see if you are eligible to be in the research study. The research study has certain requirements that must be met. If the questions show that you can be in the research study, you will be able to answer the interview questions.

If the questions show that you cannot be in the research study, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

Page 1 of 6

DFCI Protocol Number: 06-085	Date DFCI IRB Approved this Consent Form: January 16, 2007
Date Posted for Use: January 16, 2007	Date DFCI IRB Approval Expires: August 13, 2007

(Continued)

Consent Form A was approved by my university IRB for a mailed survey about substance abuse among undergraduate students. It is brief and to the point.

Consent Form B reflects the requirements of an academic hospital's IRB (I have only included a portion of the six-page form). Because the hospital is used to reviewing research proposals involving drugs and other treatment interventions with hospital patients, it requires a very detailed and lengthy explanation of procedures and related issues, even for a simple interview study such as mine with Dr. Schapira. You can probably imagine that the requirement that prospective participants sign such lengthy consent forms can reduce their willingness to participate in research and perhaps influence their responses if they do agree to participate (Larson 1993:1169).

As in Milgram's study, experimental researchers whose research design requires some type of subject deception try to get around this problem by withholding some information before the experiment begins, but then debriefing subjects at the end. In a **debriefing**, the researcher explains to the subjects what happened in the experiment and why, and then responds to their questions. A carefully designed debriefing procedure can help the research participants learn from the experience, research and grapple constructively with feelings elicited by the realization that they were deceived (Sieber 1992:39–41). However, even though debriefing can be viewed as a substitute, in some cases, for securing fully informed consent before the experiment, debriefed subjects who disclose the nature of the experiment to other participants can contaminate subsequent results (Adair, Dushenko, & Lindsay 1985). Apparently for this reason, Milgram provided little information in his "debriefing" to participants in most of his experiments. It was only in the last two months of his study that he began to provide more information, while still asking participants not to reveal the true nature of the experimental procedures until after the study was completely over (Perry 2013:76, 84). Unfortunately, if the debriefing process is delayed, the ability to lessen any harm resulting from the deception is also reduced.

Debriefing: A researcher's informing subjects after an experiment about the experiment's purposes and methods and evaluating subjects' personal reactions to the experiment.

For a study of the social background of men who engage in homosexual behavior in public facilities, Laud Humphreys (1970) decided that truly informed consent would be impossible to obtain. Instead, he first served as a lookout—a "watch queen"—for men who were entering a public bathroom in a city park with the intention of having sex. In a number of cases, he then left the bathroom and copied the license plate numbers of the cars driven by the men. One year later, he visited the homes of the men and interviewed them as part of a larger study of social issues. Humphreys changed his appearance so that the men did not recognize him. In his book on this research, Humphreys concluded that the men who engaged in what were viewed as deviant acts were, for the most part, married, suburban men whose families were unaware of their sexual practices. But debate has continued ever since about Humphreys's failure to tell the men what he was really doing in the bathroom or why he had come to their homes for the interview. He was criticized by many, including some faculty members at the University of Washington who urged that his doctoral degree be withheld. However, many other professors and some members of the gay community praised Humphreys for helping normalize conceptions of homosexuality (Miller 1986:135).

Tearoom Trade: Study by sociologist Laud Humphreys of men who engage in homosexual behavior in public facilities, including subsequent later interviews in their homes after recording their license plate numbers; widely cited in discussions of the need for informed consent to research.

If you were to serve on your university's IRB, would you allow this research to be conducted? Can students who are asked to participate in research by their professor be considered able to give informed consent? Do you consider *informed consent* to be meaningful if the true purpose or nature of an experimental manipulation is not revealed?

The process and even possibility of obtaining informed consent must consider the capacity of prospective participants to give informed consent. Children cannot legally give consent to participate in research; instead, they must in most circumstances be given the opportunity to give or withhold their *assent* to participate in research, usually by a verbal response to an explanation of the research. In addition, a child's legal guardian must give written informed consent to have the child participate in research (Sieber 1992). There are also special protections for other populations who are likely to be vulnerable to coercion—prisoners, pregnant women, persons with mental disabilities, and educationally or economically disadvantaged persons. Would you allow research on prisoners, whose ability to give informed consent can be questioned? What special protections do you think would be appropriate?

Obtaining informed consent also becomes more challenging in collectivist communities in which leaders or the whole group are accustomed to making decisions for individual members. In such settings, usually in non-Western cultures, researchers may have to develop a relationship with the community before individuals can be engaged in research (Bledsoe & Hopson 2009:397–398).

Subject payments create another complication for achieving the goal of informed consent. Although payments to research participants can be a reasonable way to compensate them for their time and effort, payments also serve as an inducement to participate. If the payment is a significant amount in relation to the participants' normal income, it could lead people to set aside their reservations about participating in a project—even though they may harbor those reservations (Fisher & Anushko 2008:104–105).

Avoid Deception in Research, Except in Limited Circumstances

Deception: Used in social experiments to create more "realistic" treatments in which the true purpose of the research is not disclosed to participants, often within the confines of a laboratory.

Deception occurs when subjects are misled about research procedures to determine how they would react to the treatment if they were not research subjects. Deception is a critical component of many social psychology experiments, partly because of the difficulty of simulating real-world stresses and dilemmas in a laboratory setting. The goal is to get subjects "to accept as true what is false or to give a false impression" (Korn 1997:4). In Milgram's (1964) experiment, for example, deception seemed necessary because the subjects could not be permitted to administer real electric shocks to the "stooge," yet it would not have made sense to order the subjects to do something that they didn't find to be so troubling. Milgram (1992:187–188) insisted that the deception was absolutely essential, although the experimental records indicate that some participants figured out the deception (Perry 2013:128–129).

The results of many other social psychological experiments would be worthless if subjects understood what was really happening to them while the experiment was in progress. The real question: Is this sufficient justification to allow the use of deception?

Gary Marshall and Philip Zimbardo (1979:971–972) sought to determine the physiological basis of emotion by injecting student volunteers with adrenaline, so that their heart rates and sweating would increase, and then placing them in a room with a student "stooge" who acted silly. The students were told that they were being injected with a vitamin supplement to test its effect on visual acuity (Korn 1997:2–3). Jane Allyn Piliavin and Irving Piliavin (1972:355–356) staged fake seizures on subway trains to study helpfulness (Korn 1997:3–4). If you were a member of your university's IRB, would you vote to allow such deceptive practices in research? What about less dramatic instances of deception in laboratory experiments with students like yourself?

Do you believe that deception itself is the problem? Elliot Aronson and Judson Mills's (1959) study of the severity of initiation to groups is a good example of experimental research that does not pose greater-than-everyday risks to subjects, but still uses deception. This study was conducted at an all-women's college in the 1950s. The student volunteers who were randomly assigned to the "severe initiation" experimental condition had to read a list of embarrassing words. I think it's fair to say that even in the 1950s, reading a list of potentially embarrassing words in a laboratory setting and listening to a taped discussion were unlikely to increase the risks to which students are exposed in their everyday lives. Moreover, the researchers informed the subjects that they would be expected to talk about sex and could decline to participate in the experiment if this requirement would bother them. None dropped out.

To further ensure that no psychological harm was caused, Aronson and Mills (1959) explained the true nature of the experiment to the subjects after the experiment. The subjects did not seem perturbed: "None of the Ss [subjects] expressed any resentment or annoyance at having been misled. In fact, the majority were intrigued by the experiment, and several returned at the end of the academic quarter to ascertain the result" (p. 179).

Are you satisfied that this procedure caused no harm? Do you react differently to Aronson and Mills's debriefing than you did to Milgram's debriefing? The minimal deception in the Aronson and Mills experiment,

coupled with the lack of any ascertainable risk to subjects plus a debriefing, satisfies the ethical standards for research of most social scientists and IRBs, even today.

What scientific, educational, or applied value would make deception justifiable, even if there is some potential for harm? Who determines whether a nondeceptive intervention is "equally effective"? (Miller 1986:103). Baumrind (1985:167) suggested that personal "introspection" would have been sufficient to test Milgram's hypothesis and has argued subsequently that intentional deception in research violates the ethical principles of self-determination, protection of others, and maintenance of trust between people, and so can never be justified. How much risk, discomfort, or unpleasantness might be seen as affecting willingness to participate? When should a postexperimental "attempt to correct any misconception" caused by deception be deemed sufficient?

Can you see why an IRB, representing a range of perspectives, is an important tool for making reasonable ethical research decisions when confronted with such ambiguity? Exhibit 3.8 shows a portion of the complex flowchart developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help researchers decide what type of review will be needed for their research plans. Any research involving deception requires formal human subjects review.

Maintain Privacy and Confidentiality

Maintaining privacy and confidentiality is another key ethical standard for protecting research participants, and the researcher's commitment to that standard should be included in the informed consent agreement (Sieber 1992). Procedures to protect each subject's privacy—such as locking records and creating special identifying codes—must be created to minimize the risk of access by unauthorized persons. However, statements about confidentiality should be realistic: Laws allow research records to be subpoenaed and may require reporting of child abuse; a researcher may feel compelled to release information if a health- or life-threatening situation arises and participants need to be alerted. Also, the standard of confidentiality does not apply to observation in public places and information available in public records.

There is one exception to some of these constraints: The National Institutes of Health (NIH) can issue a **Certificate of Confidentiality** to protect researchers from being legally required to disclose confidential information. This is intended to help researchers overcome the reluctance of individuals engaged in illegal behavior to sign a consent form or to risk exposure of their illegal activities (Sharma 2009:426). Researchers who are focusing on high-risk populations or behaviors, such as crime, substance abuse, sexual activity, or genetic information, can request such a certificate. Suspicions of child abuse or neglect must still be reported, and in some states, researchers may still be required to report such crimes as elder abuse (Arwood & Panicker 2007).

Certificate of Confidentiality: A certificate issued to a researcher by the National Institutes of Health that ensures the right to protect information obtained about high-risk populations or behaviors—except child abuse or neglect—from legal subpoenas.

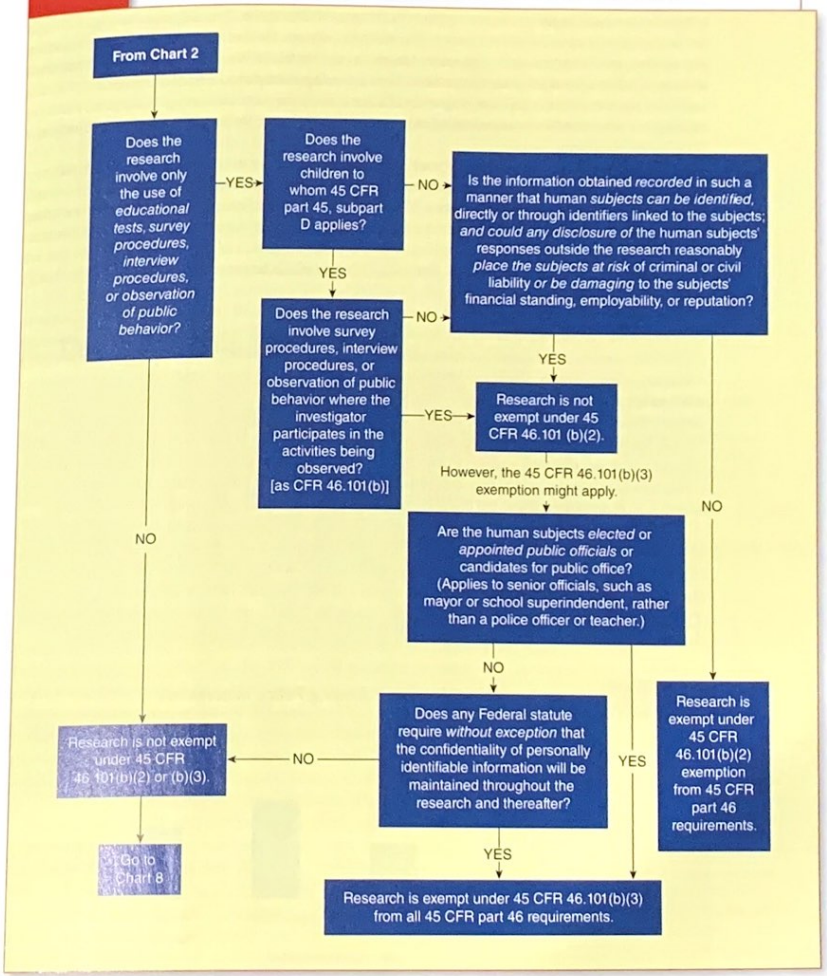
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA): A congressional act passed in 1996 that creates stringent regulations for the protection of health care data.

The **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)** passed by Congress in 1996 created more stringent regulations for the protection of health care data. As implemented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2000 (revised in 2002), the HIPAA Final Privacy Rule applies to oral, written, and electronic information that "relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health or condition of an individual." The HIPAA rule requires that researchers have valid authorization for any use or disclosure of "protected health information" (PHI) from a health care provider. Waivers of authorization can be granted in special circumstances (Cava, Cushman, & Goodman 2007).

Consider Uses of Research So That Benefits Outweigh Risks

Scientists must also consider the uses to which their research is put. Although many scientists believe that personal values should be left outside the laboratory, some feel that it is proper—even necessary—for scientists to concern themselves with the way their research is used.

Exhibit 3.8 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Human Subjects Decision Flowchart 4: For Tests, Surveys, Interviews, Public Behavior Observation



Source: Department of Health and Human Services.

Milgram made it clear that he was concerned about the phenomenon of obedience precisely because of its implications for people's welfare. As you have already learned, his first article (Milgram 1963) highlighted the atrocities committed under the Nazis by citizens and soldiers who were "just following orders." In his more comprehensive book on the obedience experiments (Milgram 1974), he also argued that his findings shed light on the atrocities committed in the Vietnam War at My Lai, slavery, the destruction of the American Indian population, and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Milgram makes no explicit attempt to "tell us what to do" about this problem. In fact, as a dispassionate social scientist, Milgram (1974) tells us, "What the present study [did was] to give the dilemma [of obedience to authority] contemporary form by treating it as subject matter for experimental inquiry, and with the aim of understanding rather than judging it from a moral standpoint" (p. xi).

Yet it is impossible to ignore the very practical implications of Milgram's investigations, which Milgram took pains to emphasize. His research highlighted the extent of obedience to authority and identified multiple factors that could be manipulated to lessen blind obedience (e.g., encouraging dissent by just one group member, removing the subject from direct contact with the authority figure, and increasing the contact between the subject and the victim). It is less clear how much Milgram's laboratory manipulation can tell us about obedience in the very different historical events to which he generalized his conclusions, but its conclusions still have potentially great benefits for society.

The evaluation research by Lawrence Sherman and Richard Berk (1984) on police response to domestic violence provides an interesting cautionary tale about the uses of science. As you recall from Chapter 2, the results of this field experiment indicated that those who were arrested were less likely to subsequently commit violent acts against their partners. Sherman (1993) explicitly cautioned police departments not to adopt mandatory arrest policies based solely on the results of the Minneapolis experiment, but the results were publicized in the mass media and encouraged many jurisdictions to change their policies (Binder & Meeker 1993; Lempert 1989). We now know that the original finding of a deterrent effect of arrest did not hold up in many other cities where the experiment was repeated, so it is not clear that the initial changes in arrest policy were beneficial. Sherman (1992:150–153) later suggested that implementing mandatory arrest policies might have prevented some subsequent cases of spouse abuse, but this does not change the fact that these policies were often ineffective.

Given the mixed findings from the replications of Sherman and Berk's experiment, do you think that police policy should be changed in light of JoAnn Miller's (2003) analysis of victims' experiences and perceptions concerning their safety after the mandatory arrest experiment in Dade County, Florida? Miller found that victims reported experiencing less violence after their abuser had been arrested (and/or assigned to a police-based counseling program called Safe Streets) (Exhibit 3.9). Should this Dade County finding be publicized in the popular press, so it could be used to improve police policies? What about the results of the other replication studies?

Exhibit 3.9 Victim Reports of Violence Following Police Intervention

Source: Miller, JoAnn. 2003. "An Arresting Experiment: Domestic Violence Victim Experiences and Perceptions." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 18:695–716. Based on table 1.

Social scientists who conduct research on behalf of specific organizations may face additional difficulties when the organization, instead of the researcher, controls the final report and the publicity it receives. If organizational leaders decide that particular research results are unwelcome, the researcher's desire to have the findings used appropriately and reported fully can conflict with contractual obligations. Researchers can often anticipate such dilemmas in advance and resolve them when the contract for research is negotiated—or they may simply decline a particular research opportunity altogether. But, often, such problems come up only after a report has been drafted, or the problems are ignored by a researcher who needs to have a job or needs to maintain particular personal relationships. These possibilities cannot be avoided entirely, but because of them, it is always important to acknowledge the source of research funding in reports and to consider carefully the sources of funding for research reports written by others.

The potential of withholding a beneficial treatment from some subjects also is a cause for ethical concern. The Sherman and Berk (1984) experiment required the random assignment of subjects to treatment conditions and thus had the potential of causing harm to the victims of domestic violence whose batterers were not arrested. The justification for the study design, however, is quite persuasive: The researchers didn't know before the experiment which response to a domestic violence complaint would be most likely to deter future incidents (Sherman 1992). The experiment provided what seemed at first to be clear evidence about the value of arrest, so it can be argued that the benefits outweighed the risks.

The Institutional Review Board

Institutional review board (IRB): A group of organizational and community representatives required by federal law to review the ethical issues in all proposed research that is federally funded, involves human subjects, or has any potential for harm to human subjects.

Federal regulations require that every institution that seeks federal funding for biomedical or behavioral research on human subjects have an **institutional review board (IRB)** that reviews research proposals involving human subjects—including data about living individuals. According to federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102(d)], research is "a systematic investigation . . . designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge," and according to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) [45 CFR 46.102 (f)], a human subject is "a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual or just identifiable private information." The IRB determines whether a planned activity is research or involves human subjects.

IRBs at universities and other agencies apply ethical standards that are set by federal regulations but can be expanded or specified by the institution's IRB and involve all research at the institution irrespective of the funding source (Sieber 1992:5, 10). The IRB has the authority to require changes in a research protocol or to refuse to approve a research protocol if it deems human subjects protections inadequate. Consent forms must include contact information for the IRB, and the IRB has the authority to terminate a research project that violates the procedures the IRB approved or that otherwise creates risks for human subjects. The **Office for Protection From Research Risks, National Institutes of Health** monitors IRBs, with the exception of research involving drugs (which is the responsibility of the federal Food and Drug Administration).

Office for Protection From Research Risks, National Institutes of Health: The office in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that provides leadership and supervision about the protection of the rights, welfare, and well-being of subjects involved in research conducted or supported by HHS, including monitoring IRBs.

To promote adequate review of ethical issues, the regulations require that IRBs include at least five members, with at least one nonscientist and one from outside the institution (Speiglman & Spear 2009:124). The IRB must also include members from both sexes, diverse backgrounds, and multiple professions. When research is reviewed concerning vulnerable populations, such as prisoners, the IRB must include a member having experience with and knowledge about that vulnerable population. Sensitivity to community attitudes and training in human subjects protection procedures is also required (Selwitz, Epley, & Erickson 2013).

Every member of an institution with an IRB—including faculty, students, and staff at a college or university—must submit a proposal to their IRB before conducting research with identifiable people. The IRB